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A Honeymoon Eclipse.



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HAROLD ROORBACH, Publisher, 132 Nassau St., N. Y.

A HONEYMOON ECLIPSE

A Comedy in One Act

BY

MALCOLM STUART TAYLOR

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NEW YORK
HAROLD ROORBACH, PUBLISHER

132 NASSAU STREET

1900
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A HONEYMOON ECLIPSE.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

FREDERICK BLOUNT, A YOUNG HUSBAND.
FLORA BLOUNT, HIS YOUNG WIFE.
MRS. WALTON, THEIR AUNT.

PLACE.—Mrs. Walton's country house. PERIOD.—The Present.

TIME OF PLAYING.—30 minutes.

COSTUMES—Modern.

PROPERTIES.

Table with books, magazines, newspapers, etc., on it. 3 chairs.
Screen. Coal-scuttle, tongs, poker, etc. Hat-rack. Pictures,
ornaments, etc., to dress the scene. Eyeglass for Mrs. Walton.
Bell off stage. Umbrella for Fred.

ABBREVIATIONS.

In observing, the actors are supposed to face the audience.
R. means right; L., left; C., centre; R. C., right of centre; L. C.,
left of centre; UP STAGE, toward the rear; DOWN STAGE, toward
the audience.

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A HONEYMOON ECLIPSE.



SCENE.—*Drawing-room boxed in 3 G. Door c. in flat, backed with hall in 4 G. French window R. 2 E. Fireplace L. 2 E. Table with books and papers on it, down C. Chairs R. and L. of table. Screen up L. C., opposite fireplace. Fire in grate. Coal-scuttle, poker, tongs, etc., by fireplace. Hat-rack up C. against backing, in front of C. door. Chair by window R. 2 E. Other furniture, as desired to make the room look richly furnished. Mrs. Walton, a matronly looking lady, is discovered seating herself at table C. She adjusts her eyeglasses, and takes up a newspaper to read.*

MRS. WALTON. There, now, to read my paper. (*Opens it.*) Society news first, of course. Full of gossip and scandal, as usual, I suppose. (*Pause, during which she reads; speaks.*) Um, ah, just as I expected. (*Reads.*) "Society electrified—reported separation of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Blount by mutual consent—incompatibility of temper, say some—jealousy on both sides, say others." (*Speaks.*) And neither very far wide of the mark. (*Folds up paper.*) So it has reached the public ears at last. What can they be thinking of? A more wanton throwing away of happiness was never heard of. Of course, I knew they both had tempers, but that they should come to loggerheads so soon, and all for nothing—it seems so silly! To me they seemed matched by Heaven itself. I am thoroughly downhearted about the affair. (*Rises; puts away the paper; bell rings outside.*) What's that, visitors? Flora's ring, surely. Come to have me condole with her, I suppose. Of course, she presumes that as I am Frederick's aunt, he has been here and told me all about it. Well, as I was matchmaker, I suppose I shall have to be peace-maker and help them out of their difficulty. (*Turns up stage.*)

ENTER FLORA, C. from L., in wrap and street costume.

FLORA (*throwing herself into MRS. W.'s arms*). O, Aunt Marie, what a blessing to find you alone—I've such a lot of things to tell you! (*Both come down C.*)

MRS. W. Have you, dear? Then sit down here near me. (*Nonchalantly.*) About Frederick?

FLORA (*with great show of indignation*). About him? Not likely.

MRS. W. (*with seeming curiosity*). About what, then? Take off your wrap, and pull a chair up to the fire. (*Aside, as she takes FLORA's wrap up to hat-rack.*) I know her—it is surely Fred or nothing that has brought her. (*Aloud to FLORA.*) Now, then, for the news. (*Sits R. of table.*)

FLORA (*temporizing*). Oh, well, I must warm myself first. (*Sitting L. c.*) There is so much, you see, to tell that I—by the by, as you mentioned that man, you might as well tell me whether you have seen him lately.

MRS. W. Quite lately. Yesterday, in fact.

FLORA. Ah! (*A moment's silence.*) How is he looking?

MRS. W. Pretty well. Pale, perhaps, if anything. (*FLORA starts slightly. MRS. W. nods to herself.*) A little dejected. I can't suppose that he is happy.

FLORA (*scornfully*). I can. He has obtained his coveted liberty again—that always counts with a man.

MRS. W. (*ignoring FLORA's outburst*). With some men, perhaps. You are looking pale too, my dear. A little rest will do you good. Why not come out into the country here with me? So quiet. Not a soul—I sha'n't invite any guests this year.

FLORA. I should like to, but—you are so close to my—his house—that—I should hate to come.

MRS. W. You needn't be afraid of meeting him here; he is going abroad almost immediately.

FLORA (*starting*). Eh? Abroad?

MRS. W. Yes, abroad.

FLORA. But, where?

MRS. W. Italy.

FLORA. Italy, why Italy? What on earth is taking him to Italy? (*Rises abruptly, and goes over to R. window; restlessly.*) Who is going with him?

MRS. W. (*coldly*). I haven't asked him.

FLORA. You showed your sense. It is that woman, of course.

MRS. W. (*icily*). What woman?

FLORA. Oh, you know. That actress—Drewry.

MRS. W. (*rising, with a little anger*). Really, Flora, I must request that you do not talk to me like this. (*Goes L.*)

FLORA. Why not—you are not dead to the world, I suppose? You're not deaf, nor dumb, nor blind? You are a reasonable person, and must see how things are going?

MRS. W. I am not blind, but you are—most wilfully so. That woman, as you call her, is a most estimable person, and about to be married to the young lawyer at whose house Frederick happened to dine one day. I have made minute inquiries, and I

believe that Fred knows as much about her as he knows about the solar system—and you know how ignorant he is of that.

FLORA. Stars celestial, yes; but stars dramatic—not a bit more ignorant than any other man.

MRS. W. That's what you think, my dear. Nonsense! Flora, I have questioned Fred about Miss Drewry, and he doesn't as much as admire her. He told me that she had high shoulders, and a mouth from ear to ear.

FLORA (*sitting R. of table*). And you were taken in by that? Why, that's the oldest trick of all. When men fall in love where they ought not, they always describe the woman to their friends as—"Not much to look at, you know," or something like that. Really, Aunt Marie, with your experience, you ought to know something.

MRS. W. (*a little incensed*). And you, with your experience, of course, know everything. (*With contempt*.) My good child, if I were you—(*bell rings*).

FLORA (*suddenly*). What's that! (*Rising and looking nervously at door c.*) Aunt Marie—his ring!

MRS. W. (*rising*). Well, what of it? Why not stay and see him, Flora? I am sure that if you both met, you—

FLORA (*going up stage after her wrap*). Met! Do you think that I would stay for one moment in the same room with that man? (*Up c.*) No! Lest I should meet him, I will go into this room (*points R.*) until he chooses to bring his visit to an end. I have still a good deal to say to you. (EXIT *c. and R.*)

ENTER FREDERICK, *c. from L., leaving hat, coat, and umbrella on hat-rack up c.*

FREDERICK. Ah, good-morning, Aunt Marie.

MRS. W. Good-morning, Fred.

FRED. (*at door, taking off gloves*). Thought I heard voices.

MRS. W. (*a little impatiently*). Well, so you did.

FRED. Ah—Mrs. Blount?

MRS. W. Yes.

FRED. H'm! In there now? (*Points off R.*)

MRS. W. I dare say. (*Pause, during which both come down stage, MRS. W. R. of table, FRED. L. of table, both sitting—FRED. first putting his gloves on the mantel at L.*)

FRED. (*after struggle to keep dignity*). How is she looking?

MRS. W. Very lovely, indeed; but pale, I think. Why on earth, Frederick, don't you try to make it up with her?

FRED. With her? You must be crazy, aunt. What! When she wilfully sought a quarrel with me, and openly insulted me?

Look here! I loved her with all my heart; and she deliberately separated herself from me.

MRS. W. Yet I think she is very unhappy.

FRED. A woman without a heart is never unhappy.

MRS. W. Really, Frederick, I think you are very unjust. She—

FRED. (*rising*). I'm done with her. Let's not discuss her any further. She can go her way—I can go mine, in future. (*Goes a little R.*)

MRS. W. I don't see where she is to go. A woman in her position is always in the wrong.

FRED. It is her own doing. She evidently found life dull with me, and very cleverly sought a road out of her difficulty.

MRS. W. Still, you must care about her welfare?

FRED. (*doggedly*). I don't, at all.

MRS. W. I gave you credit for better feeling than that. So I will tell you that she is coming here to stay with me till after Christmas.

FRED. (*with a bitter laugh*). A hint to keep away. Don't be frightened—I am going abroad this afternoon, as you know.

MRS. W. I am sorry about that. I had hoped—

FRED. Hope nothing where we are concerned. All is over and done with. (*Goes to window, R., and looks out. A pause, during which MRS. W. fixes the fire, looking significantly sideways. He looks over to MRS. W.*) She—she has plenty of money, at all events.

MRS. W. (*unconcernedly*). Plenty, I should say.

FRED. (*crossing back, R. c., suddenly*). You blame me, Aunt Marie. You think I should give in, and explain and condone the fact that she has maligned me cruelly; but that is not all. She flirted disgracefully with that hideous little brute of a captain last time we were at a ball together, and—

MRS. W. (*going L. c.*). I know all about it. She says it was only because she was so disgusted with your behavior. You're a couple of babies—you ought to be taken in hand by some firm person, and made to behave yourselves. (*Crosses past him to R. c.*)

FRED. (*wrathfully*). Oh, she says that, does she? Well, I don't care what she says. (*Going up c. to hat-rack.*) Anyhow, I sha'n't keep her in suspense any longer. (*Takes up hat only.*) Some other day I may be fortunate enough to find you at home without her. (*Comes down a little and offers hand.*) Good-by.

MRS. W. (*advancing and shaking his hand*). Good-by, my boy. I'll go to the door with you. (*They EXEUNT c. and L.*)

ENTER FLORA, C. *from R., hurriedly. She goes down R. to window, opens it, kneels on chair, and leans far out.* RE-
ENTER MRS. WALTON, C. *from L.*

MRS. W. He's gone, and where is she? (*Stops up c.; shivers.*) Gracious, what an awfully cold blast of air! What do the servants mean by opening the windows this time of year?—and (*stops short, looking toward window*). Good heavens, are those Flora's feet? (*Laughs.*) Ha, ha! Doesn't care to see him—yet hangs out of the window to catch one fleeting glance at the back of his head. Well, well! (*Calls to her.*) Flora, Flora, what are you doing there? (*FLORA draws in her head, closes window, and looks confused.*) My dear, if you had run down-stairs to the library, you could have seen him quite as easily, and without all this danger. The slightest tip would have sent you to the ground. How foolish! If I had known that you wanted to catch a glimpse of him, I might have arranged something. I—

FLORA (*petulantly*). Nonsense! It was mere curiosity—nothing more. (*Stamps her foot.*) How horrid you can be, Aunt Marie! (*Impetuously.*) Well, what did he say? Abused me as usual, I suppose?

MRS. W. He didn't spare you, certainly; but he was just, I think. (*Sits L. of table.*)

FLORA (*angrily*). Thank you! He was not only just, as you call it, but evidently in the highest spirits. I could hear his hateful voice out there. (*Sits R. c. and places hat upon table.*) Well—er—how is he looking?

MRS. W. (*laughing*). Ha, ha, ha!

FLORA (*regarding MRS. W. with disfavor*). What have I said to make you laugh?

MRS. W. Not much. Only, that is the very first question that he asked about you.

FLORA (*angrily*). How rude of him! And you? I hope you said I was never looking better.

MRS. W. Yes, I said you were in robust health, and didn't seem to care a pin about anything connected with him, at all events.

FLORA (*disappointed*). Oh, did you?

MRS. W. That was right, wasn't it?

FLORA. Quite right. Fancy his wanting to know how I looked! For what, I wonder?

MRS. W. "Mere curiosity," my dear, of course—the same feeling that made you nearly throw yourself out of the window just now, simply to catch a fleeting vision of the back of his detested head.

FLORA (*tartly*). If you think it was anything else, you—

MRS. W. My dear girl, I don't; how could I?

FLORA. And—and it is true that he is going abroad?

MRS. W. Quite true. He starts this afternoon. So you are safe to come here and stay with me over Christmas. In fact, I made it safe for you—I told him you were to be with me all the time.

FLORA. And he?

MRS. W. Said that alone would be enough to keep him from coming here.

FLORA (*shocked*). He said that? (*Recovers herself, and rises haughtily.*) I'm glad he has some sense of decency. (*Crosses over R. to window; sits down and looks out thoughtfully. Voices are heard outside. She starts.*) Good heavens! Aunt Marie—Oh, you told me he had gone to Italy!

MRS. W. Well, so he has.

FLORA. He hasn't—he's here—he's coming up the stairs! (*Springs to her feet and looks around distractedly.*) Where shall I go?

MRS. W. He is coming, sure enough. (*Rises.*) Bless me, what liars men are! And he declared to me—

FLORA. Never mind what he declared—never mind anything—think of me! (*Wrings her hands before Mrs. W.*) I can't go out of the door, or I'll meet him face to face. (*Goes down L.*) Oh, why do they build rooms with only one way out! If there were another door, I might—

FRED. (*outside*). All right, don't trouble yourself; I'll get them myself.

FLORA. Aunt Marie, I'm undone! (*Sees screen near fireplace.*) No, I shall be secure behind this. And don't keep him long—and—

MRS. W. (*wildly, trying to prevent FLORA from going behind screen*). But, my dear, he will probably say all sorts of things—and you will be listening—and—(*FLORA gets behind screen*). Good gracious! It isn't fair. It will be dreadful—

FLORA. I shall put my fingers in my ears. (*In a stage whisper.*) Betray me at your peril.

ENTER FREDERICK, C. from L., going to hat-rack up C.

FRED. (*up C.*). Beg pardon, Aunt Marie—but I left my coat and umbrella. I was so distracted—forgetful, I should say—I thought I'd come back for them.

MRS. W. (*flustered*). Oh, yes—but—ah—I thought you had gone to Italy.

FRED. (*coming down c.*). Too late for the train—beastly nuisance! (*Looks around furtively.*) But—a—I thought—er—heard voices as I came up the stairs.

MRS. W. Did you? Probably the maid on the next landing.

FRED. My gloves—(*looks over at mantel*). Ah, on the mantel. (*Goes for them, but she takes the gloves before he reaches the mantel.*)

MRS. W. Yes, he—here they are.

FRED. (*takes gloves*). Thank you. (*Stands R. of table, putting them on.*)

MRS. W. (*aside*). Will he never go! As for her putting her fingers in her ears. I don't believe a word of it. (*Pokes fire.*)

FRED. (*taking his hat*). Flora was with you?

MRS. W. Yes—

FRED. Gone out for a walk?

MRS. W. Yes. (*Sees FLORA's hat, and contradicts herself.*) No, no! In retirement. (*He sits down, R. of table. MRS. W. groans in distress, but turns it into a sneeze.*)

FRED. Ah, a little cold?

MRS. W. Yes; this fire doesn't seem to burn up.

FRED. Let me poke it. (*Rises and starts L.*)

MRS. W. (*standing L. and keeping him back with the poker*). Oh, no, no—really, you needn't mind—I—ah—assure you I can poke it all right. (*Pokes fire again, and shakes poker at FLORA, who is seen crouched behind the screen with her fingers in her ears.*)

FRED. Flora isn't ill, is she? (*Sitting R.*)

MRS. W. (*going to him*). Really, Frederick, considering the terms that you and Flora are on, I think it a little—well—a little odd of you, to say the least, to cross-examine me about her like this. Such anxiety about her health, on your part, is hardly to be expected. (*Goes up R.*)

FRED. (*rising*). Anxiety—on my part? I can't imagine what you mean by that. (*Goes over to fireplace, and leans against mantel with his back toward the screen.*)

MRS. W. (*turns and sees him; is frightened; then stammers*). D—d—don't stand there—so very bad for your complexion.

FRED. (*turning his back toward fire*). I'm chilly. (*Absently.*) Anxious about her—the woman who wilfully deserted me; who—

MRS. W. (*frantically*). Once for all, Frederick, I decline to discuss your wife. Talk of taxation, servants, the education of the lower classes—any abominable subject you like, but not of Flora.

FRED. (*obstinately*). I can't help it. You began it. You sug-

gested that I did or should feel anxious about Flora, and I insist upon showing you why—

MRS. W. I quite understand, I assure you.

FRED. No, you don't. You can't, or you wouldn't have spoken to me as you did. A man more barbarously treated than I have been— (*The screen is seen to shake.*)

MRS. W. (*down R.*). Of course! Of course! (*Aside.*) Oh, these young women and their fingers in their ears! (*Very nervous.*)

FRED. Eh, what's that?

MRS. W. I'm not well, Frederick. I'm tired. I've toothache, neuralgia, sciatica, lumbago, tic-douloureux, *everything*. (*Frantically.*) I wish you would go away!

FRED. (*looking at her sceptically*). You look all right. What you really mean is that you—don't want to hear my exculpation. I don't blame you. She has been priming you with abuse of me, of course; but I insist upon setting myself right with you. You think that Flora is in the right, but she isn't. It is I who am in the right. (*Strikes his clenched fist against his breast.*)

MRS. W. (*aside, turning away from him*). Good heavens, how long is this to last! (*The screen is seen to shake.*)

FRED. (*violently*). Look here! Once for all, you shall know the truth. She married me, not knowing her mind, which seems of a poor sort; and, tiring of me, she sought to regain her liberty. She never believed that story about me, but it served as a pretext for her plan. She deliberately broke off all relations with me, simply to suit herself, and with a full belief in her inmost heart that I was innocent of the ridiculous charge that she laid at my door. She— (*The screen falls, revealing FLORA standing, furious with rage. MRS. W. falls into her chair R. C., half fainting. FRED. steps back in astonishment, stepping into the coal-scuttle, which he kicks away. Pause. Picture.*)

FLORA (*advancing and looking at him sternly*). How dare you say that! (*He looks sheepish, but makes no reply; she turns to MRS. W.*) And you—you listened to him, applauded him, took his part—you said that I had treated him barbarously! (*Crossing past MRS. W. to R., grieved.*) Oh, Aunt Marie!

MRS. W. (*apologizing confusedly*). Yes, no, that is, I—

FRED. (*advancing L. C. toward MRS. W.*). And you knew she was there all the time (*looking scornfully at her, she returning his look*). You let me say what was in my mind without even trying to check me. You—

MRS. W. (*rising to her feet, indignantly; sternly*). Once for all, I am done with you; yes, both of you—you are ungrateful, worthless, heartless. Hitherto I have done what I could for you.

In the future you shall manage your own affairs without assistance from me. You may make use of this room—this house—anything of mine—but ne—never again, *never!* (*Goes up c. and EXIT.*)

FRED. (*to FLORA*). There, you've done it again, as usual!

FLORA (*going R. c.*). Done what? I've done nothing. It is you who have done everything. And not satisfied with having insulted me, you come here and abuse me to Aunt Marie behind my back.

FRED. I spoke only the truth. And you—was it fair to hide behind a screen and listen to what wasn't intended for you? (*Hotly.*) There's an ugly word for that, you know.

FLORA. I don't care what ugly names you call me—your opinion has ceased to be of any importance. And I wasn't listening. I kept my fingers tight in my ears until you had been here for hours. Then my arms tired, and I—

FRED. Hours? Bah! (*With sardonic laugh.*) I like that! I say, I haven't been here twenty minutes—

FLORA. Oh, you could say anything! (*Crosses past him contemptuously and sits in chair R. of table, taking up magazine and reading it indifferently.*)

FRED. (*stands R. c.; mockingly*). Well, not a word of refutation? You acknowledge, then, that I spoke only the bare truth when I said that you sought to get rid of me because you were tired of me?

FLORA (*deliberately*). To refute that, I must be rude—I must say that you are not telling the truth. But that, after all, is scarcely a rudeness—you know it without my telling.

FRED. I know nothing of the sort. If there is an untruth anywhere, it belongs to the person who told you that I had anything whatever to do with Miss Drewry.

FLORA (*starting to her feet, and facing him angrily*). I forbid you to mention that woman!

FRED. I see no reason why I shouldn't.

FLORA. And all those frequent journeys to town a few days after we were married?

FRED. Business took me to town on every occasion.

FLORA (*scornfully*). Why can't you think of something new? Business! Was there ever a case of this sort when "business" wasn't the excuse for it?

FRED. (*sneeringly*). I wonder who your monitress is! She ought to be proud of her pupil—she has taught you a good deal of stuff.

FLORA (*stamping her foot*). I won't be sneered at by you! I

came here, hoping to avoid you, and—(*pause; then suddenly*). What brought you here to-day?

FRED. (*doggedly*). To see you.

FLORA (*struggling to suppress emotion; then bursts into weeping*). Ah!

FRED. (*making a move toward her*). Flora!

FLORA (*sobbing*). Don't attempt to call me by my name—and don't think that I am crying because of you! No, it is my self-esteem that is hurt. I cannot forget that I once— (*She breaks down completely*).

FRED. (*sadly*). Did you once love me? Then what is all this about? Flora, listen to me! From the day of our engagement—nay, from the day when we first met—I had no thoughts for any but you. I declare it! What can I say more?

FLORA (*with a little despairing gesture*). Oh, it is too late! There are so many things not to be forgotten.

FRED. (*with spirit*). Quite true, there are many things; but as to their not being forgotten, well—there was your flirtation with that army fellow!

FLORA (*straightening up*). Captain Pierrepont? Nonsense! I defy you to think that I meant anything by that—that hideous, foolish, pale-eyed creature— (*laughing*).

FRED. (*laughing*). Yes, he wasn't handsome.

FLORA (*stopping short; austerely*). It is growing late; are you going? (*Crosses past him to table*).

FRED. Not at all. I hope that Aunt Marie, in spite of all that has come and gone, will give me my dinner. (*Puts hat and gloves upon table*).

FLORA. But I am to stay here. (*Takes up hat*).

FRED. Well—?

FLORA. I suppose you mean me to have no dinner?

FRED. On the contrary, I hope that you will dine with me. Considering what I have already endured from you, I think you will prove a very desirable addition to the feast.

FLORA. Well, I sha'n't dine with you. (*Twirls hat*).

FRED. (*suddenly*). Why not, Flora—is it so irremediable? Think! We were happy once, and— (*she turns away and bursts into tears*.) O my dear, you are crying again! (*Advancing and holding out his arms*.) Make it up with me, Flora, and we'll let the past go by. (*He puts his arms about her as she turns away*).

FLORA. Oh, but is it true that you—that I—that it was all untrue about that woman? You will never forgive me! (*Tries to draw away*).

FRED. Try me. What is there I wouldn't forgive you? But, oh, Flora, how could you have thought it?

FLORA. I didn't want to think it—but—(*turns, looks in his face, drops hat, and throws her arms about his neck*)—Freddy!

FRED. Flora! (*He kisses her.*)

ENTER MRS. WALTON, C.; *she stops short, raising hands, yet showing pleasure.*

MRS. W. That's right. Kiss and make up, like good children. (*She comes down C.*)

FRED. We have; for, thanks to you, dear Aunt Marie, we have seen the folly of our misunderstanding and have come from under the shadow of A HONEYMOON ECLIPSE. (*He takes MRS. W.'s hand, she taking the hand of FLORA.*)

FRED.

MRS. W.

FLORA.

CURTAIN.

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